CLAIMS

I/We claim:

1. A method for conducting cashless transactions, comprising the steps of:

receiving, at a first network device associated with a seller, information identifying a product intended to be purchased at a purchase price by a purchaser, the purchase price to be paid by a transfer to the seller of funds on deposit in or credited to an account of the purchaser, the identity of the purchaser account being unknown to the seller;

transmitting over a network, to a second network device associated with a financial institute at which the purchaser account is maintained, an authorization of the purchaser to pay the purchase price for the identified product through the transfer to the seller of the funds from the purchaser account;

determining if the funds in the purchaser account are sufficient with respect to the purchase price; and

transmitting over the network, to the first network device, an authorization of the financial institute for the seller to proceed with delivery of the identified product, the authorization being transmitted only if the funds are determined to be sufficient.

2. A method according to claim 1, further comprising the step of:

transmitting over the network, from a third network device associated with the purchaser to the first network site, the information identifying the product intended to be purchased.

3. A method according to claim 2, wherein the information is first information and the transmitted first information further identifies the purchaser and that the payment of the purchase price will be by the transfer of the funds from the purchaser account unknown to the seller, and further comprising the steps of:

6   transmitting over the network, from the first network device

7 to the third network device, second information identifying a

8 plurality of products available for purchase, a plurality of

9 purchase prices each associated with a respective one of the

10 plurality of products, and a plurality of payment options including

11 payment by the transfer to the seller of the funds and payment by

12 at least one of credit card and debit card;

13   selecting, at the third network device, (i) the product to be

14 purchased from the plurality of products and (ii) the payment of

15 the purchase price by the transfer of the funds from the plurality

16 of payment options; and

17   transmitting over the network, from and the third network

18 device to the second network device, third information identifying

19 the product to be purchased, the purchase price of the product,

20 and the purchaser.

     4. A method according to claim 3, wherein:

     the authorization of the purchaser is transmitted from the

third network device to the second network device.

     5. A method according to ~~claim 3,~~ wherein:

     the third information is transmitted responsive to the

selecting the payment of the purchase price by the transfer of

the funds.

1   6. A method according to claim 3, further comprising the step

2 of:

3   automatically establishing a hyperlink to the second network

4 device for transmission of the third information after the

5 selecting of payment of the purchase price by the transfer of the

6 funds.

1   7. A method according to claim 3, further comprising the steps

2 of:

3   transmitting over the network, from the first network device

4 to the second network device, a notice of delivery of the

5 identified product to the purchaser; and

6   directing the transfer of the funds to the seller responsive

7 to receipt of the notice of delivery at the second network device.

1   8. A method according to claim 1, wherein the method is

2 performed in real time and the network is the Internet.

1   9. A system for conducting cashless transactions, comprising:

2   a communications network;

3   a first network device, associated with a seller, configured

4 to receive information identifying a product intended to be

5 purchased at a purchase price by a purchaser, the purchase price to

6 be paid by a transfer to the seller of funds from an account of the

7 purchaser, the identity of the purchaser account being unknown to

8 the seller;

9   a second network device, associated with a financial institute

10 at which the purchaser account is maintained, configured to

11 receive, via the network, an authorization of the purchaser to pay

12 the purchase price for the identified product by the transfer of

13 the funds, to determine if the funds are sufficient with respect to

14 the purchase price, and to transmit, to the first network device

15 via the network, an authorization for the seller to proceed with

16 delivery of the identified product if the funds are determined to

17 be sufficient.

1   10. A system according to claim 9, further comprising:

2   a third network device, associated with the purchaser,

3 configured to transmit, to the first network device via the

4 network, the information identifying the product intended to be

5 purchased.

1   11. A system according to claim 10, wherein:

2   the information is first information and the first information

3 further identifies the purchaser and an intention of the purchaser

4 to pay the purchase price by the transfer of the funds;

5   the first network device is further configured to transmit,

6   to the third network device via the network, second information
7   identifying a plurality of products available for purchase, a
8   plurality of purchase prices each associated with a respective one
9   of the plurality of products, and a plurality of payment options
10   including payment by the transfer of the funds and payment by at
11   least one of credit card and debit card;

12   the third network device is further configured to receive
13   first input from the purchaser representing a selection of the
14   product intended to be purchased from the plurality of products, to
15   receive second input from the purchaser representing a selection of
16   the payment of the purchase price by the transfer of the funds from
17   the plurality of payment options, and to transmit, to the second
18   network device via the network, third information identifying the
19   product intended to be purchased, the purchase price of the
20   product, and the intended purchaser.

12. A system according to claim 11, wherein:

the third network device is further configured to transmit,
to the second network via the network, the authorization of the
purchaser.

13. A system according to claim 11, wherein the third network
device includes an input device for receiving the first input and
the second input.

14. A system according to claim 11, wherein:
the third network device is further configured to transmit,
to the second network device via the network, the third information
responsive to receiving the second input.

15. A system according to claim 11, wherein:
the third network device is further configured to
automatically establish a hyperlink to the second network device
via the network for transmission of the third information
responsive to receipt of the second input.

1   16. A system according to claim 11, wherein:

2   the first network device is further configured to transmit,

3   to the second network device via the network, a notice of delivery

4   of the identified product; and

5   the second network device is further configured to transmit,

6   via the network, a directive to transfer the funds

7   responsive to receipt of the notice of delivery.

1   17. A system according to claim 9, wherein the network is the

2   Internet   and   the   system   operates   in   real   time.

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1   18. An article of manufacture for conducting cashless

2   transactions over a network having a plurality of network stations,

3   comprising:

4   a computer readable storage medium; and

5   computer programming stored on the storage medium, wherein the

6   stored computer programming is configured to be readable from the

7   computer readable storage medium by a computer and thereby cause

8   the computer to operate so as to:

9   generate a signal to establish a first network communications

10   link, with a first network station associated with a seller;

11   receive from the first network station, via the first network

12   communications link, first information identifying a plurality of

13   products available for purchase from the seller, a plurality of

14   purchase prices each associated with a respective one of the

15   plurality of products, and a plurality of payment options including

16   payment of the purchase price by a transfer to the seller of funds

17   from an account of a purchaser and payment by at least one of

18   credit card and debit card;

19   display the first information;

20   receive first inputs from the purchaser selecting a product

21   from the plurality of products and a payment of the purchase price

22   by the transfer of the funds from the plurality of payment options;

23   automatically generate, responsive to the selection of the

24   payment of the purchase price by the transfer of the funds, a

25   signal to establish a second network communications link with a

26 second network station associated with a financial institute with
27 which the account is maintained;
28   transmit to the first network station, via the first network
29 communications link, second information identifying the selected
30 product, and the identity of the purchaser, without identifying the
31 account;
32   transmit to the second network station, via the second network
33 communications link, third information identifying the selected
34 product, the purchase price of the selected product, and the
35 identity of the purchaser;
36   receive from the second network station, via the second
37 network communications link, a request to approve payment of the
38 purchase price by the transfer by the financial institute to the
39 seller of the funds;
40   receive second inputs from the purchaser approving payment of
41 the purchase price for the selected product by the transfer by the
42 financial institute to the seller of the funds;
43   transmit to a second network station, via the second network
44 communications link, fourth information representing the purchaser
45 approval of the payment of the purchase price for the selected
46 product by the transfer by the financial institute to the seller of
47 the funds; and
48   receive, via the second network communications link, fifth
49 information representing an account statement indicating that the
50 funds have been transferred from the account by the financial
51 institute to the seller in payment of the purchase price of the
52 selected product; and
53   display the fifth information.

1   19. An article of manufacture according to claim 18, wherein
2 each of the network communication links is an Internet
3 communication link and the second network communications link is
4 established by a hyperlink.

1   20. An article of manufacture according to claim 18, wherein
2 the first network communications link is a relatively unsecure

3 communication link and the second network communications link is a
4 relatively secure communications link.

1   21. An article of manufacture for conducting cashless
2 transactions over a network having a plurality of network stations,
3 comprising:
4   a computer readable storage medium; and
5   computer programming stored on the storage medium; wherein the
6 stored computer programming is configured to be readable from the
7 computer readable storage medium by a computer and thereby cause
8 the computer to operate so as to:
9   receive, via the network, information identifying a product,
10 a purchase price of the product, an identity of a seller of the
11 product, and an identity of a purchaser intending to purchase the
12 product by payment of the purchase price through a transfer by a
13 financial institute to the seller of funds from an account of the
14 purchaser maintained with the financial institute, the account
15 being unidentified to the seller;
16   transmit to a first network station, via the network, a
17 request for purchaser approval of the payment of the purchase price
18 through the transfer by the financial institute to the seller of
19 the funds;
20   receive from the first network station, via the network, the
21 purchaser approval of the payment;
22   determine if the funds are sufficient with respect to the
23 purchase price; and
24   transmit to a second network station, via the network, an
25 authorization of the financial institute to proceed with a sale to
26 the purchaser of the product after the funds are determined to be
27 sufficient and the purchaser approval is received;
28   transmit a direction to transfer the funds in payment of the
29 purchase price of the product; and
30   transmit to the first network station, via the network, an
31 account statement indicating the funds have been transferred in
32 payment of the purchase price of the product.

1   22. An article of manufacture according to claim 21, wherein
2 the network is the Internet.

1   23. An article of manufacture according to claim 21, wherein
2 communications transmitted to and received from the first network
3 station via the network are relatively secure communications and
4 communications transmitted to and received from the second network
5 station via the network are relatively unsecure communications.